

THE USAU YOUTH



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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

African-American History is the History of America

Each February, the United States celebrates Black History Month. Black History Month is a time for remembrance, a time that all Americans, regardless of race, color, or creed, can reflect on the story of African-Americans - a story of resilience and perseverance, a story of achievement against all odds.

This year, the Association for the Study of African American Life selected *"Black Women in American Culture and History"* as the theme for Black History Month

2012. Under this theme, the people of the United States will honor the many African-American women who played an important role in shaping our country into the nation it is today - the women who fought against racial and gender discrimination, the women who, in many instances, risked it all.

We honor the legacy of African-American women through programs, ceremonies, and activities that illustrate the varied roles these women continue to play as caregiver, community leader, business executive, diplomat, artist, actress, educator, and trailblazer. We pay tribute to the generations that paved the way and used their experiences to in-

spire the generations still to come. As President Barack Obama stated in his 2012 National African-American History Month Presidential Proclamation, though African-Americans continue to face challenges, Black History Month is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements and significant contributions African-Americans have made to the U.S. society, a society continuously transformed by its

growing diversity, but one that demonstrates the benefits of tolerance and equal opportunity for all.

This continuous transformation unites each of us, as the story of African-



The many faces of African American History

Americans is not unique to the United States. Our story transcends racial and religious differences and territorial borders, and it is my hope that our collective struggles and triumphs inspire all who are working to create a more perfect union.

While February is set aside as a time to focus on the achievements of African-Americans in the United States, African-Americans and their history are a very integral parts of the story of America and as such should be celebrated throughout the year.

Jasmine White
Political and Public Diplomacy Officer
U.S. Mission to the African Union

EDITORIAL NOTE

Welcome to the second edition of *The USAU Youth* e-newsletter. If you enjoyed the first edition of the newsletter, you are likely to take pleasure in reading this one.

This month's edition includes an attention-grabbing interview with an exceptional African Union Commissioner, articles on child labor, maternal mortality, cardiovascular diseases, the African Union Youth Division, and what's more is that most of these articles come from you, our dear readers from all over Africa.

Please join us this month on Facebook to discuss or share your experiences on heart related ailments, and why not 'like' our USAU Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Mission-to-the-African-Union/93218692247>.

Again, *The USAU Youth* is considering providing you with more interesting articles at the beginning of each month, so don't be surprised to receive the next edition of your newsletter much earlier.

While looking forward to hearing your say in our next editions, we wish you a healthy month.

Bari Fanzo

USAU Youth Liaison to the AU

The *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)* defines a child as a human being below the age of 18 years. It recognizes the child's unique and privileged position in society, as well as their need for protection and special care. This care includes guarding against all forms of economic exploitation, such as commercial sexual exploitation; illegal drug use, and the kidnapping, sale, and trafficking of children as all of these actions subject children to hazardous conditions and compromises the physical, social, mental, spiritual, and moral development of its victim.

According to the *Ugandan National Labour Policy*, child labor is work that is hazardous and exploitative and threatens the health, safety, physical growth, and mental development of children. This is increasingly becoming a serious issue, depriving many Ugandan children of a bright future. An estimate from the *National Household Survey* in 2005 placed the number of child workers aged 7 – 14 years at 38.3% or 2.2 million. This is quite a large number which has increased through the years due to little or no law enforcement as a result of the government's lack of resources, and a tolerant attitude towards child labor in our communities.

The Importance of Eliminating Child Labor

Child labor deprives children of their rights to education, rest and leisure, and freedom from economic exploitation, which are all rights guaranteed in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*, both ratified by Uganda in 1990 and 1987 respectively. If Africa believes that a child today is a youth tomorrow, and that youth are the key to sustainable development, then the most obvious consequence of child labor in Africa will be the creation of a generation of young people who do not have the necessary skills to match the global labor market or take an active role in developing Africa.

Although Uganda's progress in increasing the number of children receiving a primary education is substantial as compared to other Sub-Saharan countries, the rate of children who actually complete their primary education is still much lower than desired. Therefore, child labor is directly impacting Uganda's long-term economic growth and, ultimately, consigning millions of Ugandans to continued poverty.

Causes of child labor in Uganda

Domestic violence is the principal factor in the growth of child labor in Uganda today. There exist a good number of broken homes, found in almost all parts of the country, where children are forced to become the breadwinner. They carry out most of the household chores such as farm work, domestic work and many of the other duties their parents should be doing. This dependency on children leads to elevated school dropout rates, a lack of early development, increased numbers of street children, and even early marriage as these children, who are still very young in age, start believing they are capable of managing their own families. **Poverty** is seen the second biggest driver of child labor, not only in Uganda but in most developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Social and economic disruptions*, such as the loss



An 11 year old girl selling in the market to make money for her school uniform. At the time this picture was taken, she had already missed her school lessons for a week.

of a parent, either to death or abandonment also a factor into poverty. It is estimated that for children between the ages of 6 – 17, almost 20% have lost at least one parent due to HIV or conflict. Consequently, these children become a greater burden on their extended relatives, who are often already struggling to feed and educate their own biological children. In some cases, orphaned children have no relatives to assist and become the head of the household themselves, often providing for younger siblings. Often, having a large family, which is a cultural pride in Uganda and most African countries, becomes a burden to parents who are unable to provide for every child.

Although the Government of Uganda claims to provide Universal Primary Education for free, families still need to cover school “development” fees supplies such as notebooks, uniforms, and lunch to name a few. The cost of attending school therefore becomes too high for many Ugandans living below the poverty line. In addition, some parents or guardians fail to see the value in educating their children and feel that if the child does not get an education he or she must work, thereby encouraging child labor in all parts of the country. This illustrates how members of the community, including many parents themselves, have generally accepted child labor as a societal norm.

In an interview on how domestic violence in the West Nile in Uganda has resulted in increased child labor, a young girl from a polygamous home, whose mother divorced her father, was forced to live with one of her stepmothers. She

explained how she was always given all of the household chores and as a result she was often too tired to study or even understand her homework at night. Despite her present circumstance, the girl remained hopeful that one day her life would change.

What can be done better to halt the increase of child labor in Africa?

It's therefore my humble appeal to our African leaders to channel their efforts into doing the following, which in many cases, has worked elsewhere:

- Supporting workers' struggles to organize unions and rejecting child labor;
- Campaigning for institutions to adopt and enforce labor codes of conduct;
- Implementing and supporting fair trade or labeling initiatives;
- Using collective bargaining strategies;
- Promoting global labor standards in trade agreements;
- Filing lawsuits against corporations for labor rights abuses abroad; and
- Promoting access to education.



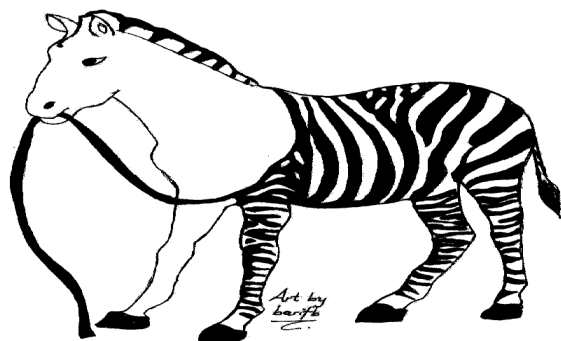
A picture from the Karamoja region in Uganda. The Karamajong do not recognize child labor as an abuse of the child's rights.

Alitia Elia

*Radio Journalist - Straight Talk Forward
Kampala, Uganda*

MONTHLY PROVERB

“A man cannot undo his past. Can zebras wipe away their stripes?” – Southern African Proverb.



This proverb illustrates that *it is a waste of time to torture yourself about errors that have already been made and cannot be changed.*

It should be a motivation for you to learn from whatever mistakes you've done in the past and strive never to repeat them in the future.

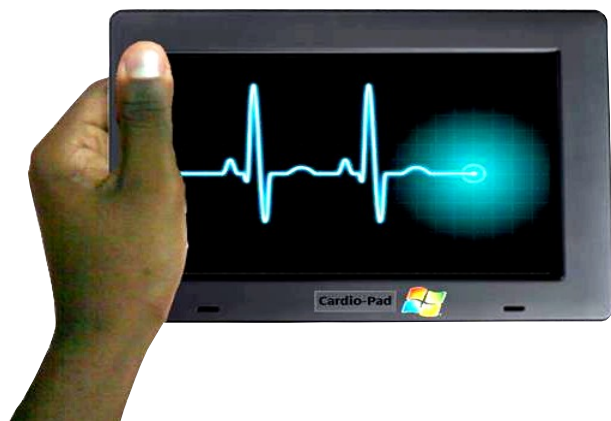
See you all next month.

Bari Fanzo

*African Union Youth Volunteer (AU-YV)
USAU Youth Liaison to the AU*

“I don't know about other Zebras, but as you can see I'm undoing my stripes.”

ARTHUR ZANG CREATES THE FIRST AFRICAN MEDICAL TABLET



THE CARDIOPAD

Arthur Zang, a young Cameroonian engineer has created what he calls the *Cardiopad*, a touch screen medical tablet that enables heart examinations such as the electrocardiogram (ECG) to be performed in remote, rural locations while the results of the test are transferred wirelessly to specialists who can interpret them.

For a country that has a population of more than 20 million people, Professor Ndobo Pierre, Head of the Cardiology Department at the Yaoundé Central Hospital, stated that about 3 or 4 regions in Cameroon are still lacking a single specialist. With most of these cardiologists based either in Yaoundé or Douala, the political and economic capitals of Cameroon, patients must travel long distances to consult a doctor. Even worse, patients must make an appointment months in advance. Sadly, many of the patients die during the waiting process.

Recent research shows that heart related ailments have increased through the years in low income countries as well as the rest of the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Over 80% of cardiovascular disease related deaths occur in low income countries. 17.3 million people died globally in 2008 as a result of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs). While these CVD related deaths represent 30% of global death rates, it is estimated that by 2030, almost 23.6 million people will die from heart disease and stroke. The Cardiopad will therefore help patients living in Africa's remote areas, those who have to travel long distances to urban centers for

medical examinations. While hugely helpful to countries like Cameroon, the Cardiopad can also be used in developed countries where patients can be diagnosed before they arrive at the hospital, in cases of emergency.

With such an innovation in our midst, the obvious question is: *Who is Arthur Zang and how did he create the Cardiopad?*

Arthur was born in 1987 and attended Lycée de Mbankomo. He later attended the National Advanced School of Engineering (Polytechnique) from 2004-2010, where he majored in Computer Engineering. In 2008, his curiosity for biomedical IT motivated him to do his 4th year internship at the General Hospital of Yaoundé. During which, Professor Kingue Samuel, a cardiologist, taught Arthur how to read and analyze the digital signals of the cardiac system. At the end of his internship, Arthur developed a C++ application to detect the heart-beat in a cardiac signal.

Before his 5th year at Polytechnique, Professor Kingue, cardiologist and Arthur's internship supervisor, asked Arthur to create a solution for an issue he was facing. Professor Kingue explained that he had patients who lived in Obala, Garoua, Ngomou, and other areas on the outskirts of the country who traveled all the way to Yaoundé to do their medical exams. Transportation and the logistics of moving to the city were very costly for such patients and the medical follow up exams were equally challenging. Coupled with that, Prof. Kingue added that in Cameroon there were less than 30 cardiologists to provide services for the country's 20 million citizens. Thus, the professor wanted to know if there was a way for Arthur to resolve this problem.

The alarming ratio of 30: 20,000,000 prompted Arthur Zang to find a solution to this pending national health problem. He decided to work on the transmission of the ECG signal through a mobile network, in order to conduct medical exams from distances away from city hubs – such as rural areas – and transfer the signals through GSM. This technological method would save a trip to the city for patients from rural areas.

At the end of his thesis, he created a national transmission system among all the Cameroonian hospitals, which he called CARDIONET, in order to manage and analyze medical exams from one pole. This system enabled hospitals in rural areas to conduct exams with a computer, and transmit the results to a hospital where there was a cardiologist, who could

interpret the results and make a diagnosis from a distance. Together with a few cardiologists in Cameroon, he carried out several medical tests that were validated by the Cameroon Scientific Community. Arthur says the reliability of the pad device is as high as 97.5%. His creation caught international attention early in February 2012, when he put it online to seek venture capital to mass produce the device.

According to *Radio Netherlands*, which was the first to break the news, the tablet is used as a modern electrocardiograph device. Electrodes are placed on the patient and connected to a module that in turn connects to the tablet. When a medical examination is performed on a patient in a remote village, for example, the results are transmitted from the nurse's tablet to that of the doctor who then interprets them. In comparison with the classical electrocardiograph in which results were printed on paper and handed to the cardiologist for interpretation, the cardiopad digitalizes and transmits the results which the heart surgeon interprets, even remotely, from his own tablet and then sends the diagnosis and prescribed treatment.

As reported by the Cameroon daily newspaper, *Cameroon Tribune*, Arthur was accompanied by Professor Kingue Samuel of the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Science of the University of Yaoundé I, during a working session with the Prime Minister, Philemon Yang. This resulted in the Prime Minister instructing the cabinet of ministers to assist Arthur Zang in the production of additional copies of the device.



Arthur Zang, creator of the first African cardiovascular disease device

The cardiopad is currently in production and will be available for hospitals by July 2012. It is already generating a lot of interest in various African technical and medical circles. Arthur intends to begin selling the device for 1500 Euros (about \$1900 USD), as opposed to the 3800 Euros (or about \$5000 USD) needed for the traditional electrocardiograph device in Cameroon. Arthur hopes to start a company to help improve the medical system in Cameroon and the rest of Africa.

It can be said that someone, Arthur Zang, was able to use Apple's popular iPad concept to enrich the lives of the less fortunate.

To discover more about Arthur Zang and the Cardiopad, please visit the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMxLtvOqiXI>. Please note, the presentation is completely in French. You can contact Arthur at the following email address: marc_arthur2005@yahoo.fr

Olivia Mukam

*President and Founder - HARAMBE Cameroon
Yaoundé, Cameroon*

&

Bari Fanzo

*African Union Youth Volunteer (AU-YV)
USAU Youth Liaison to the AU*

FEBRUARY'S PUZZLE

SUDOKU PUZZLE

JANUARY'S PUZZLE

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THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION AND THE AFRICAN YOUTH

Recent years have seen Africa increasingly recognizing the importance of youth and their role in taking larger, more substantial steps toward developing the continent. So, as the July 2011 African Union Heads of State and Government Summit debated on the theme of “*Accelerating Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development*,” it is increasingly important to commit to giving youth the space to engage and participate in matters of development and issues concerning them. Through the African Union Commission, great work has been done and continues to be done to encourage youth participation on the continental level – improving the positive perception of youth initiatives and also promoting and empowering the African youth. Having a good understanding of the before mentioned situation justifies that sustainable development can only be achieved if all segments of society participate and get involved in the continent’s development. We all know by now that youth constitute a majority of the African population (about 60% of the continent’s population is below 35) and therefore, an important segment of the population that needs to be taken into account. That means that youth must be well-educated and equipped with the relevant skills and competencies to contribute to sustainable development. When their rights are recognized and space is made available to express creativity and take initiatives, young people can challenge and build their own future while still participating in assembling the puzzle toward a brighter future for the continent.

Accelerating youth empowerment also means acknowledging the youth as an asset for development, not as a threat.

With that in mind, through the African Union Commission, the Human Resources, Science and Technology Department, through the Youth Division, is committed to bringing positive changes to the area of capacity building, youth empowerment and development that will facilitate youth participation in a meaningful way. Some of the programs addressed by the Youth Division include:

- ***Promoting the popularization, ratification, and implementation of the African Youth Charter***, a legal instrument adopted in 2006 and entered into force on August 8, 2009. As of today, twenty-eight countries have ratified the charter and another twenty countries are working toward its implementation.
- ***Putting into action the Youth Decade Plan of Action 2009 - 2018***, a tool to assist the acceleration of the implementation of the African Youth Charter at the continental, regional, and national levels. It is also a framework to promote development of skills that guarantees youth empowerment.
- ***Revitalizing the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)*** program at the continental level is another challenge faced by the Division. The effort to improve technical skill development in Africa is a response to youth unemployment in Africa. A specific TVET framework is designed for

post-conflict countries to contribute to the building of capacities of youth previously involved in conflicts, but now engaged in the reconstruction process of their own countries.

- ***Creating a continental Youth Volunteer Corps***. Continued support for the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps (AU-YVC) will allow the program to move forward toward enriching the capacity and empowerment of the youth. Launched in early December 2010, the program has trained 200 youth to date. The objectives of this initiative include the development of values such as the spirit of service, useful participation, capacity building, leadership, Pan-Africanism, and continental integration.

These programs equip YOU, African youth, with the power to become agents of change. The Division puts at the forefront programs that set the tone, create the conditions, and make available the opportunities to become a positive influence in communities, countries, regions, and at the continental level. The Youth Division equips African youth with the tools necessary to serve as the foundation for exploring the power within their reach. It is often said that “*with great power, comes great responsibility*,” with this said, it is the time to prove that we, young Africans, are worthy of the responsibility, the dreams for a better continent are within our reach.

So, discover and familiarize yourself with your charter, know your rights. Be the example. Become an ambassador for African Youth leadership and excellence today.

*Chimene Astrid
African Union Youth Division
African Union Commission*

DID YOU KNOW? ... LET'S DISCUSS ON FACEBOOK
(Facebook page name: U.S. Mission to the African Union)

Cardiovascular Diseases in Africa

Heart or cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a disorder or functional abnormality of the heart and the blood vessels that supply oxygen rich blood to the myocardium (or the heart muscle that does the work of contracting the heart to pump blood) and the blood vessels that remove the deoxygenated blood from the heart muscles to the heart. When such an abnormality occurs, the heart is impaired and ceases to function normally, and the person develops CVD.

Did you know that according to an estimate of the World Health Organization (WHO), CVD is the most common cause of death globally, and by another estimate the second highest in Africa after infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria? An estimated 17.3 million people died from CVD in 2008, representing 30% of all global deaths. By 2030, almost 23.6 million people will die from heart related diseases, such as high blood pressure or hypertension, diabetes, stroke, and cardiac arrhythmia, just to name a few.

CVD and heart related diseases are often only attributed to older people but in recent years, young people have increasingly been affected by these diseases. Some of the causes for this are the increased use of tobacco, consumption of alcoholic beverages, an unhealthy diet, and lack of physical activity.

What does this mean for Africa? The long term impact of this trend could include:

- Substantial loss in national incomes;
- Increased or continuous poverty; and
- Death for many Africans in their most productive years.

Without health, individuals cannot be productive. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the life expectancy is about 50 years of age and with CVDs, the life expectancy will be reduced even further, thereby depleting the African continent or a single country of its labor force.

With the majority of Africa's population being under the age of 30 and given the fact that, people in low and middle-income countries who suffer from CVDs have less access to effective and equitable health care services (including early detection services), many of these people may die young, and during their most productive years, as a result of a CVD.

Please tell us what you think on Facebook in response to the following:

- How can the burden of CVDs be reduced in Africa?
- What is being done and what could be improved in Africa's response to CVDs?

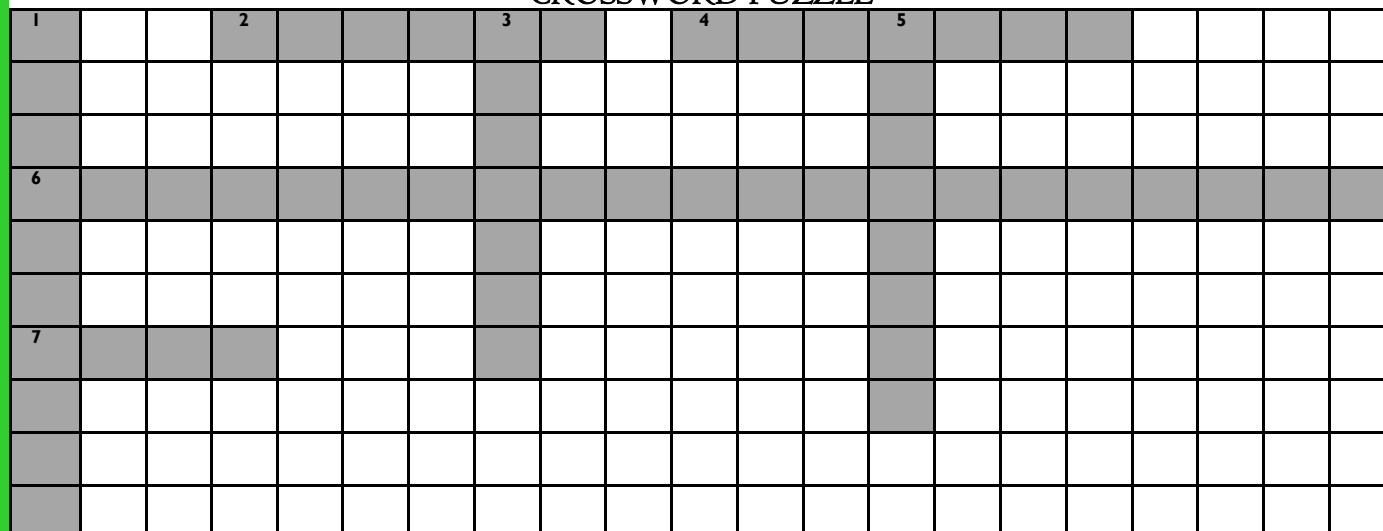
NOTE: Do not hesitate to share pictures of what you or your country is doing in the relation to the reduction of CVDs, by sending your pictures and an explanatory note to USAUyouth@state.gov

Our Facebook link is: http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10150595821377248&id=93218692247

The information has been provided through various open sources.

The Human Heart: Art by barifb@yahoo.co.uk

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



DOWN

1. Another name for heart muscles
3. A green leafy plant that is used to make cigars and cigarettes
5. Activity that requires physical or mental exertion, especially when performed to develop or maintain fitness

ACROSS

2. The general condition of the body
4. The state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support
6. Another name for a heart disease
7. A regulated selection of food for medical reasons or for weight loss

JANUARY'S ANSWERS

DOWN

1. A set of individuals inhabiting a territory - **Population**
2. A major land mass situated between the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean - **Africa**
3. A transparent, odorless, tasteless liquid - **Water**
4. A prolonged period of water shortage that affects growing or living conditions - **Drought**
7. The indiscriminate cutting down trees or clearing off of forests - **Deforestation**
12. Travelling for leisure, recreational or business purposes - **Tourism**

ACROSS

5. An abundant flow of water over land which is usually not submerged - **Flood**
6. A region found at the North West of Africa and consists of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia - **Maghreb**
8. A solid form of water accumulated through the years and found on high mountains - **Glacier**
9. A long-term change in the earth's average atmospheric temperature due to natural variability or human activities - **Climate Change**
10. A state of disharmony between two or more parties that is often manifested in prolonged fighting - **Conflict**
11. The cultivation of land, production of crops and raising of livestock - **Agriculture**
13. Excessive grazing of animals on land to the detriment of the vegetation - **Overgrazing**
14. Another name for a shepherd or a herder - **Pastoralist**

A WORD TO THE WISE H. E. ADVOCATE BIENCE P. GAWANAS

H.E Advocate Bience Philomena Gawanas is the African Union Commissioner for Social Affairs. Her office works on diverse matters such as health, children, population, migration, labor and employment, youth protection, disabilities, and social integration, just to name a few.



H. E. Bience Gawanas:
Commissioner of the AUC
Department of Social Affairs

The USAU Youth: Your Excellency can you tell me a little about the link between the African Union Department of Social Affairs and

African youth?

Advocate Gawanas: The link is simple; the Department of Social Affairs is about people. You can never discuss social issues without putting people in the center of what you do – therefore, youth become a very, critical component of the work that we do in the department. Youth are taking charge across the whole continent; so, we are talking about a population that now is the majority of our continent. You cannot discuss issues like sports, HIV, unemployment, or disability without talking about the youth.

The USAU Youth: What changes do you think targeting the youth can bring to Africa?

Advocate Gawanas: I was once a youth and I like to claim that I'm still one. The youth played a critical part in bringing about independence in my country, Namibia. They were on the front lines; they fought with arms, with pens and paper, and therefore I want to believe that if they could be so critical in the decolonization of Africa, they must continue to remain critical in the development of Africa.

The USAU Youth: How does your department collaborate with the AU Youth Division under the Department of Human Resource, Science and Technology?

Advocate Gawanas: They are forced to work with us and we are forced to work with them, even if we do not always see eye to eye, we are bound to work with each other.

Basically, Social Affairs leaves the policy issues to the Youth Division – for example, the implementation of the Youth Charter. We, on the other hand focus on the issues affecting youth. For instance, if we are talking about employment, we want to look at how unemployment impacts the youth. So in a way, we do collaborate closely but we are also clear about our parameters. Ultimately however, Social Affairs wants whatever we are doing to be included in the implementation of the African Youth Charter, as dictated by the AU Youth Division.

The USAU Youth: In regards to the African Union Youth Volunteers Corps (AU-YVC), I learned that your department has employed three volunteers, which further emphasizes the fact that your department is promoting youth development in Africa. What is your opinion about this program, from what you know and have observed so far with your volunteers?

Advocate Gawanas: I've been the foremost proponent for youth volunteers in this organization because I feel that youth are what will carry the AU forward, not the Commissioner of Social Affairs, but the young people who come to work with us for 3 to 4 months or perhaps even longer. They will carry that experience and privilege with them and will be our ambassadors; they'll go out and begin talking about the AU.

The AUYVs that are working here are doing a fantastic job in my department. In fact, if there was space I'd actually take 10 of them. Often, one of them will come in and say *"I have an idea, let's do it this way"* and I'll say *"That's not how things are done here, but let's try it and if it works then fine."* They are so energetic and are not tied up by bureaucracy. They always want to move the goal post and challenge the conventional way of doing things. So I really enjoy working with the young people we have here.

The USAU Youth: Your Excellency, can you tell me a little about yourself – your background and perhaps some highlights from your life as you were growing up?

Advocate Gawanas: I was born in Namibia, a country which borders South Africa, and grew up a time when apartheid was the system of governance in the region.

Continued on page 10

We had white South Africans as our colonizers and apartheid was implemented in South Africa and Namibia. However, the big difference is that South Africa was not colonized but was ruled by a minority, while Namibia was a colony of South Africa.

So, as a child growing up in those circumstances, where a whole system tells you that by virtue of your skin color you are a lesser human being than someone else, you have two choices – believe that it's true, or take a stand against it. I chose to take a stand against it. Being black did not make me less important, and I wanted to prove this to them. I did prove them wrong; I left Namibia as a refugee but most importantly, a freedom fighter. I lived in refugee camps in Angola and Zambia, and I went to Cuba where I taught Namibian refugee children, then I finally got to the UK.

I remember when I wanted to study law in Namibia, I was told by a white person that my intellect was much lower than that of a white child, and I had no chance of being able to study law. I'll never forget that day. That was the most painful thing I ever heard in my life and I decided then and there that being a lawyer was what I wanted to do. I also studied law because a young man was murdered and, until this day, we do not know who murdered him. But what I knew then was that he was killed by a white man during the time of apartheid. I went to the court and listened to the proceedings and decided that I would never be a victim to injustice, under no circumstance. So that is why I studied law, because blacks couldn't receive justice under that type of system and I wanted to change it. I believe in justice and fairness.

The USAU Youth: From a refugee to an advocate and now a commissioner, please tell me what lessons you learned at the refugee camps and how did they mold your life and shape you into the person you are today?

Advocate Gawanas: I was in exile for twelve years and didn't see family members during those years. From this experience, I learned that *human beings can survive against all odds and that wherever you are, you can mold your circumstances*. In fact, I am closer to some of the people I knew in exile than to my own brothers and sisters, because we lived through some of the most difficult moments of our lives together. I gave birth to my eldest daughter in a refugee camp and I experienced both solidarity and togetherness. You never knew if you'd wake up the next morning or not

because the South Africans were coming into our camp to bomb. In fact, on May 4, 1978, they bombed a camp in Angola called Cassinga and hundreds of Namibians died. So, there were many days and nights where we were on alert, and we slept with our babies on our backs because we didn't know when the call would come. Sometimes, we'd go out of the camp in the morning, at the time the Boers would most likely come to attack and only return in the late afternoon when we knew they had gone. So, for me to be here today, working at the AU and hearing about conflicts and wars, I cannot help but feel a sort of association – I was a freedom fighter, I was there and I understand.

The USAU Youth: Please tell me a little about the qualities that channeled you toward success?

Advocate Gawanas: *I know myself and I respect myself.* I know that I have both the capacity and the capability to deliver, but I also know that I cannot do it on my own. I have always appreciated the people who have worked with me along the way, and who have been there for me when the going got tough. I think I always had the confidence to say to myself *"I can do it, nothing is beyond my capacity."* I may not accomplish everything but I am not scared to take up the challenge.

Secondly, being raised in a family of 11 children, *my parents never made me feel that as a girl, I was a lesser human being*. In fact I was the first in my family that went to university and everyone else followed after me. They say I'm the one who encouraged them and was their role model. It's nice to look back and say that, *"I have not kicked the ladder away, but I have kept the ladder up, for others to climb to get to where I am."*

"I have not kicked the ladder away, but I have kept the ladder up, for others to climb to get to where I am."

The USAU Youth: First as a woman, and secondly as the AU Commissioner of Social Affairs, what have you done to promote women and gender issues in Africa?

Advocate Gawanas: In 2003 when the Commission was established, I was fortunate to be among the first Commissioners. I was also fortunate to be among the first women elected to serve at this level in both the OAU (Organization of African Unity) and the AU. I believe we, African women, can gain what we want if we push for it. We advocated for and lobbied to mandate 50/50 gender parity in the AUC. It is an achievement for all African women that there are five female Commissioners out of the ten elected. I always say that we should not feel that Africans always have to learn from others. We also have a lot to teach them. Now, when I go to the European Union and I see only a few women sitting there, I can proudly say it makes me feel very empowered.

I am also particularly proud of the launch of the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA). People kept asking me what about HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis are in the continental agenda, but what about maternal mortality? We always talk about Africa being a rich continent yet, in Africa women are still dying while giving life. This became the campaign called CARMMA. Thirty-five countries have already launched it and I'm extremely passionate about it. I think it is really important to put women at the center. We talk of gender equality but I believe that if women were really respected, then pregnancy and giving birth would not still be a complication. I asked this and people were shocked, but suppose it was men that were dying from getting pregnant, would they too have this kind of high mortality in Africa? Now, I am called Madame CARMMA at the AU.

But again throughout my life whatever job I did, I never denied the fact that I was a woman and I always advocated for gender issues. At home in Namibia for instance, I was *Chairperson of the Law Reform Commission* and the first law we changed for gender was the combating of rape, where we even made marital rape a crime. I was also a *Public Service Commissioner*, one of the first women to be appointed to public service in Namibia. There were of course a lot of discriminatory rules against women in the public service. Women could not receive paid leave so they had to retire from the public service when they were pregnant and reapply for a job when they had recovered. There was no continuity in terms of pension, we changed all that. I definitely see women as the substance of my existence and I'm not only doing what I do just because I'm a woman but because I'm obligated to and I don't apologize for that at all.

The USAU Youth: I appreciate the fact that all the youth volunteers working in your department are assigned to work on the CARMMA project, a sign that you have succeeded in merging the youth with women and gender issues in your department.

Advocate Gawanas: You know the youth are also a portion of the women who fight for gender equality in Africa. It was absolutely important to draw attention to and use the link between these two groups of people in this continental campaign.

The USAU Youth: Your Excellency you recount your story like it was an easy ride, but I definitely know that as a woman implementing all these changes in a male dominated world, wasn't easy. Can you tell me what some of those challenges were, how you overcame them, and how it impacted your life?

Advocate Gawanas: Anybody who knows me sees who I am. I've always been *open, honest, and frank* about what I believe and I've never shied away from saying what I think and what I want to do. So it has had an advantage in my life because I really don't mind if people shun my ideas or fight it. I've never believed in bureaucracy, rules, and regulations, and stuff like that, that has allowed me to survive working in a male dominated world.

An example of the way I handled difficulties is for instance, 15 years ago, after I gave birth to my second child while I was working at the Commission in Namibia. At the time there were just 2 female Commissioners and I became pregnant with my second child and, being pregnant, I came face to face with a lot of the rules in the public service. There were days I'd feel like I didn't want to wake up so, when I was at a meeting and I was tired, I'd just tell my colleagues, *"you know what? I'm sitting here every day but be assured that your partner is going through exactly what I'm going through. She's pregnant and feeling sick and nauseous, she's restless and probably needs a nap like me, so I'm going home."* They had never experienced having a pregnant woman at that level in government. I also breastfed each of my children for one year and was the Patron of the Breastfeeding Association. Overall, I fought for mother's rights.

In brief, a lot of what I do is informed by my personal circumstances, which is what really drives me, regardless of the challenges. All of us have the capacity to do great

Continued on page 12

A WORD TO THE WISE H. E. ADVOCATE BIENCE P. GAWANAS

and extraordinary things. I am not a superwoman, there is something deep down in all of us. Each one of us has the capability to discover who we are and bring about change.

*"I am
because
you are.
You
never
walk
alone."*

The USAU Youth: Who served as your role model when you were a youth?

Advocate Gawanas: I don't know if I can say I had a specific role model but whenever I close my eyes, I see an 85 year old woman, *my mother*. She is a woman who brought eleven children into this world and no matter the circumstance, she never discriminated against anyone.

Other role models include *my sisters and all of the women around me*. The everyday woman inspired me because she was at the forefront of our liberation struggle; she was out there facing the bullets. So, I guess if you talk about role models, it's the everyday, ordinary woman. She taught me what it meant to be resilient, how

to love my neighbor, and how to do unto others what I wanted them to do unto me.

The USAU Youth: Without a doubt, there are many young people, especially young women across the continent, who look up to you as a mentor and a role model. What can you tell them is your life conviction?

Advocate Gawanas: *"I am because you are."* You never walk alone. All that you confront here, you'll have to overcome here, but you do not have to face your problem alone.

The USAU Youth: Thank you Your Excellency for inspiring young people around the world, and especially in Africa, by sharing your life experiences and beliefs.

Advocate Gawanas: It was my pleasure to have you here.

*Bari Fanzo
African Union Youth Volunteer (AUYV)
USAU Youth Liaison to the AU*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

USAU Announcements:

On February 23, 2012, USAU Ambassador Michael A. Battle met with students from the University of Toronto to discuss the role of USAU in the United States' diplomatic relationship with the African Union. The youth were on a week-long trip to Addis Ababa to speak with various leaders at the AU and the U.S. Mission to the AU.

AU Announcements:

For African youth who wish to be African Union Youth Volunteers (AU-YV) kindly visit <http://africa-youth.org/programmes/au-yvc.html> for more information.

Government institutions and organizations in Africa that wish to reap the dividends of engaging an AU-YV make your request known to the African Union Youth Volunteer Corps (AU-YVC) by visiting the following link: http://africa-youth.org/programmes/auyvc_request.html

African Youth Announcements:

In June 2012, African and American youth/entrepreneurs will travel to Cameroon for a 12 days exchange program on business and entrepreneurship. The event will also host a 2 day conference on *"The Future of Africa's Development through Business and Entrepreneurship."* To learn more about how to participate in this program, contact Olivia Mukam – President/Founder of Harambe Cameroon, olivia.mukam@gmail.com or Ngalim Eugene – Executive Director of CAMYOSFOP, ngalimeug@gmail.com

THE VOICE OF VOLUNTEERS

FREASELAM BELAY



Freaselam Belay (center) and friends during his service in Niger in West Africa.

I am Freaselam Belay, a joint Peace Corps and African Union Youth Volunteer. I am from the western United States and for the last four years I have been living and working in Africa as a Peace Corps Volunteer, having spent two years in rural Niger and two years in rural Ethiopia. In my fifth year of service, I am partnered with the African Union Commission (AUC) here in Addis Ababa.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger my work promoted community development through strengthening Niger's health sector. One of Niger's primary health concerns is the health of newborns and young children. Malnutrition was startlingly high among their young ones and part of my job was to help find mothers affordable and effective ways to nourish their children, given their limited resources. Living in

Niger was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Despite their lack of resources, Nigeriens inspired me through their resilience and ability to make the most of what they were given. There, my passion for Africa grew and prompted me to continue my service to the continent.

From Niger I continued my Peace Corps service in Ethiopia. Ethiopia has proven to be a very special assignment for me, as both of my parents were born and raised in Ethiopia. They left for the U.S. during difficult times in the early 1980s. In fact the meaning of my name Freaselam ("the fruit of peace") comes from being their first born child in America. Living and working in the land of my parents has given me deep insight into what their life was like before they moved to the United States as well as the sacrifices they made to ensure my siblings and I had a better life. My work here has been as fulfilling personally as it has been professionally.

Currently, I am assigned to the Youth Division of the Human Resources, Science and Technology Department of the AUC. In my position as a Field Officer with the new AU-YVC program, my primary duties include; developing a reporting mechanism for active volunteers, further developing the volunteer training component, and promoting the program to the general public. My numerous years as a Peace Corps Volunteer have afforded me the capacity to recognize the strengths of this unique program as well as add an additional perspective to its evolution. Experience has taught me to appreciate the opportunities I am given and in doing so my enthusiasm has not diminished.

*"Experience
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*Freaselam Belay
AU Youth Volunteer/Peace Corps Volunteer
Field officer – AU-YVC*

THE UNITED STATES STUDENT ACHIEVERS PROGRAM OFFERS GATEWAY TO QUALITY U.S. EDUCATION



The United States Student Achievers Program (USAP). A program implemented by the EducationUSA section of the United States Embassy in Harare

In 1999, the U.S. Embassy in Harare decided to reach out to Zim-

babwean students who have

the talent to succeed at U.S. universities but who, lacking knowledge of the U.S. system and encouragement from adults, would not think of looking west for further studies. Thanks to Rebecca Zeigler-Mano in the Embassy's Education USA office, the United States Student Achievers Program (USAP) was born.

USAP offers unique, intensive assistance for gaining access to quality education to exceptionally talented but economically disadvantaged students in Zimbabwe. It works closely with students over the course of a year through meetings and seminars designed to assist them with the rigorous application process. It also focuses on building their confidence and creating bonds among the group that shares similar backgrounds and will face similar challenges while studying in the U.S. USAP does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, ancestry, sex, religion, age or disability, nor does it use these criteria in its selection.

For twelve years now, over 300 Zimbabwean USAP students have excelled as students at America's top colleges and universities. Many are now continuing their education with graduate studies or are working all over the globe; most importantly, several are now coming back to Zimbabwe to invest their talents here.

The program has been replicated in 16 countries on 4 continents: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Serbia, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Jamaica, Latvia, Madagascar, Malawi, and Mongolia. Mozambique and Ethiopia launched USAP programs in 2011. Several other countries are considering launching

Getrude Makurumidze, shares her motivation for pursuing study in the U.S. after winning a full four-year scholarship this year to attend Bryn Mawr College, one of the top women's colleges in the United States through USAP.

There are an estimated 16 million AIDS orphans in the world today, and Gertrude is one of them. HIV has cumulatively become the most horrible global challenge. *"I feel it, I hear it and I see it on a daily basis. I have witnessed the terror of this pandemic from a close range. It has wrecked havoc in my immediate community, wiping out entire families, including my very own."* Gertrude shares her experience not as an authority, nor a scholar, but as a survivor – the only one left from a family of four.

Ironically, these horrifying childhood experiences - the loss of her only sister, both of her parents, and growing up in a society without parental protection - have strengthened her will power beyond measure. She has developed the will to achieve and to save humankind from the deadly effects of this pandemic. Impelled by this aspiration, Gertrude has developed a keen interest in the medical field, not as a mere profession but as a vocation and an apostolate. *"As an orphan, I owe my achievements and survival to men and women of goodwill. I feel indebted to plough back into the local community and to stand as a beacon of hope among the hopeless,"* she says.

"I am convinced that I will be part of a success story."

This young woman finds pleasure in visiting the Mother of Peace Orphanage, whose special call is to cater for AIDS orphans in Mutoko, Northern Zimbabwe. Her heart bleeds at seeing infants who are orphaned from birth - most of whom are already HIV positive. Moreover, they suffer so much rejection and discrimination. She has observed many pilgrims who flocked to the orphanage – heavy with gifts and monetary donations, yet, condescendingly stare at these children as poor, delinquent creatures to be pitied. *"My colleagues even kept a safe distance upon hearing that the children were AIDS orphans. Yet, I feel differently. For me these kids are an extension of my family. I see my late sister Natasha in*

them. I literally become lost in them, hugging, kissing, wrestling, and racing. We share jokes, quizzes and puzzles relating to pertinent life issues – imparting HIV and behavior change awareness in a casual way. I guide them, not as a teacher, but as a sister, a friend and a peer. I feel their love as human beings, my brothers and sisters, not as objects to be dreaded. It is this dimension of love that I intend to add to the field of child education and care giving for HIV and AIDS orphans.”



Gertrude Makurumidze

Gertrude has also observed that the world has almost given up on the hope of finding a cure and vaccine for HIV and has already labeled it an incurable disease. Nevertheless, she is convinced that one day we shall conquer the pandemic the same way humanity has conquered measles and smallpox. *“I am convinced that I will be part of the success story - bringing the long awaited cure for HIV and AIDS to the world. This opportunity to study in the U.S. has opened a vista of hope for the realization of my childhood dream. This is because most U.S. institutions offer amazing research opportunities with adequately equipped laboratories, in addition to committing resources to investment in the field of biomedical research,”* says Gertrude after winning the USAP scholarship. *“I refuse to give death the final word. I will live. I will achieve. I will save, and I will join men and women of goodwill in this now decades old battle for the survivors of HIV and AIDS.”*

Thanks to USAP, Gertrude is on her way to making a change for her community and continent. The deadline for candidates in Zimbabwe to apply to the program is **March 16, 2012**. Forms are accessible online at www.usapglobal.org. You can also contact Sharon Hudson Dean- Counselor for Public Affairs, hararepas@state.gov.

*Sharon Hudson-Dean
Counselor for Public Affairs – U.S. Embassy
Harare, Zimbabwe*

CARMMA – THE CAMPAIGN FOR ACCELERATED REDUCTION OF MATERNAL MORTALITY IN AFRICA

CARMMA is an initiative by the AUC to curb the number of pregnancy related deaths in Africa. The main objective of CARMMA is to reduce maternal mortality by 75% by the year 2015, as compared to the maternal death rate in the 1990's, which once totaled 870 deaths per 100,000 live births in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to UN interagency maternal mortality estimates. Globally, there are over 358,000 maternal deaths per year and Africa accounts for about 53%. CARMMA also works on intensifying the Maputo Plan of Action and the Abuja Call.

In 2006, health ministers from all African Union Member States met in Maputo, Mozambique, where they adopted a plan of action to address and ensure universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health; this became known as the Maputo Plan of Action, and also marked the birth of CARMMA. The Abuja call emerged from a meeting of health ministers which took place in Abuja, Nigeria in 2009. That meeting called for Accelerated Actions toward Universal Access to HIV/AIDS,

tuberculosis, and malaria Services. From these two declarations, the first form of the CARMMA campaign was launched under the theme *“No Woman Should Die While Giving Birth.”*

A few key causes of maternal death in Africa are malaria, anemia, HIV/AIDS, heart, lung, liver and kidney diseases, and ectopic pregnancies. After identifying some of the causes, a tool was developed that illustrated the progress of the actions implemented in accordance with the two earlier declarations. This tool known as the ***Progress Assessment Tool***, was designed by harmonizing the Maputo Plan of Action and the Abuja Call, along with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4, 5, and 6 – which focus on reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases.

There is a link between CARMMA and young people in Africa. Maternal mortality also affects young people, as we deal with early pregnancies that could possibly bring significant complications that could result in death.

In addition, the issue of unwanted pregnancies,

and the health risks associated with terminating unwanted pregnancies, results from the lack of family planning, information on sexual reproductive health, and peer pressure. As a result, the Youth Division under the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology have merged with the Department of Social Affairs to work on getting youth involved in the CARMMA initiative. African Union Youth Volunteers in the Department of Social Affairs are therefore charged with facilitating the production and implementation of communication and advocacy instruments in order to better achieve the goals of CARMMA.

We would really appreciate it if you could “like” the CARMMA page on Facebook, www.facebook.com/CARMMAfrica and follow us on twitter www.twitter.com/CARMMAfrica

Remember, Africa cares: No woman should die while giving life.

*Mphatso Jacqueline Price
African Union Youth Volunteer (AU-YV)
Data Manager, AUC*

U.S. MISSION TO THE AFRICAN UNION

The USAU Youth is a platform for African youth around the world and the views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the United States Government.

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The USAU Youth thanks all the readers who sent in articles for this month's edition. Please keep sending in the articles, announcements, and information on any subject matter you would like to see in subsequent editions of the newsletter to USAUyouth@state.gov. Kindly share with us activities and pictures of what you or your country is doing in relation to cardiovascular diseases in Africa . Thank you.

NOTIFICATION:

KINDLY TAKE THE TIME TO FILL OUT ALL THE REQUIREMENTS UPON SUBSCRIPTION. WE WILL BE UNABLE TO SEND YOU A COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER IF YOUR DATA IS INCOMPLETE.

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